

Mopar engine makes this one powerful Diplomat

By Paul Gutierrez

My favorite car is a 1985 Dodge Diplomat that I bought for \$100. The motor had 90,000 miles on it and it ran, but it didn't run the greatest.

At the dealership where I work, the car came in on trade.

Although it's a General Motors dealership, we'll take anything in on trade, but we usually try to stick with GM cars.

High-mileage or off-brand cars are usually sold at a dealer's auction, which probably would have been my car's fate.

I purchased it for daily transportation, so I didn't have plans to build it up, but I did a few things here and there. One thing led to another and it's pretty built up today.

Although it's an ex-police car, my car isn't anything special, but it does turn a lot of heads because it's different.

It has a lot of high performance parts and I took out the original motor and put in a 1970 Dodge 340 that I totally rebuilt.

A few years ago, I installed a nitrous-oxide system that enables me to inject nitrous oxide (laughing gas) into the motor, which increases the horsepower and makes it a lot faster.

I started out with a 100 horse nitrous oxide system and now I have 400 horse.

Although I have instant horsepower at the push of a button, the nitrous oxide is hard on the engine. I've been thinking about putting a 440 engine in it, which is a big block, as compared to the 340 engine, which is a small block.

With a bigger motor, I wouldn't have to do as much to make it go fast.

Because the 440 is a totally different engine, I'd have to purchase all-new high performance parts and basically start all over, which would require more work and more money.

The work doesn't bother me, but the money is another issue.

It's not an original high performance car, which makes it unique; you don't usually see high performance ex-police cars.

In fact, I've never seen another one like it.

Although I'd like to have one, original high performance cars are difficult to find and really expensive, which is one of the primary reasons I built this car up.

I get a lot of compliments on it, so I'll just stick with this one and be a little different and unique.

It was an excellent price and I've been a Chrysler Mopar fan since I was a teenager.

"Mopar" is a slang term for a high-performance Chrysler car.

I won a trophy from racing my Dodge at the Martin Dragway last August when they had a "Mopars Against the World" day. I was entered into the trophy race and I won.

I also take my car to the Mopar Nationals in Indianapolis, which is one of the major shows I attend.

People with Mopars travel from every state in the country, as well as from countries like Canada and Australia.

I don't think that the people from other countries bring their cars, but they do come to buy parts.

It's one of the biggest car shows in the United States and I've been taking my car there since 1991.

I bought the car in 1990, but I'm not done working on it yet.

I'd like to have it repainted because the paint is getting a little old.

The interior and exterior are brown. The brown interior doesn't match much of anything else, but I'd like to paint it black like an undercover police car with black tinted windows.

After all, it has spotlights and a big antenna that the state police cars once had.

It doesn't look like a police car does today, but it looks like a police car of its era.

—As told to Tara Marion

Paul Gutierrez lives in Kalamazoo and drives a 1998 Pontiac Bonneville. He works at Century Buick GMC Truck Inc.